

Story # 7 Tap

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The Girl in the Iron Closet

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later she said to her father: I will consent to marry you if you have built for me an iron closet which locks from the inside. Her father had the closet built to his daughter's specifications. He brought the closet home and put it in the girl's room. On their wedding day, the girl wore her bridal gown and entertained the guests who had come to see the bride. That evening she stole to her room and locked herself in the iron closet. They looked for her everywhere in vain. Finally they decided that the girl had become part of the underworld because of her father's sin. After all, it was a sin for a father to marry his own daughter.

Some time later, the girl's father sold the closet, since it was of no use to him. The padishah of the country bought the closet and had it placed in his sick son's room. Every evening a servant used to leave in the room of the padishah's son his daily food; half a loaf of bread, half a ring of sausage (sucuk), and a glass of fruit juice. The girl got into the habit of coming out of the closet every night and eating this food. When the padishah's son could not find his food the next day, he asked the servant, "Did you forget to leave food in my room yesterday evening?"

"No, I didn't," the servant answered, "Probably the mice ate it." This continued a few days. One evening the padishah's son decided to stay awake and find out what was going on in his room at night. Thinking that the padishah's son was asleep, the girl came out of the closet. She was interrupted by him as she was eating the food.

"Who are you? What are you doing in my room?" he asked.

"Everything that has happened to me can be blamed on this black-stoned ring," the girl explained, and then she told her story to him.

From then on, the padishah's son ordered the servants to put a loaf of bread, <sup>and</sup> a whole ring of sausage, instead of the half portions, and two glasses of fruit juice. He did not reveal the girl's presence to anybody. The news of his son's improved appetite made the padishah very happy. "I believe my son is recovering from his sickness," he thought.

Indeed, the padishah's son soon became well enough to join the army to fulfill his military service.<sup>1</sup> Before he left he told the servants to continue bringing food to his room even though he would be gone, and not to sell the iron closet in his room.

The first part of his wish was obeyed, but, finding no use for the iron closet, they sold it. The new owner of the closet was a woman who wanted the padishah's son to marry her daughter. She had sensed something mysterious about the closet and decided to unfold its mystery. She placed it on a hot stove. The girl endured the heat as long as she could, but when her feet started burning, she came out of the closet. Then the woman and her daughter removed the girl's bridal gown and left her in the street.

She spent the night at the mosque courtyard. An old man returning from the early morning prayer at the mosque saw the girl and asked, "What are you doing here this time of the day, my child?" The girl told the man her adventures. He took pity on her and said, "I shall take you home with me. You can wait on my wife." He bought the girl some

<sup>1</sup>This is obviously an anachronism. Compulsory military duty for all able-bodied Turkish men is a more recent regulation than the era of padishahs.

clothes to wear, and she started living with the old couple.

When the padishah's son returned from his military service, he inquired about the iron closet. The servants said, "Since there was no use for it, we sold it."

"Is that right?" he replied. "In that case, I am sick again." He once more lay in his sickbed. When the padishah came to visit him, he told his father, "Order everybody in the country to make soup for me."

The padishah said, "But son, if what you want is soup, I shall have caldrons of it made for you. We do not need anybody else's soup."

"This is my wish," his son insisted.

Then people in the sultanate took turns at making soup for the padishah's son. One day the girl made some soup to be sent to him. The old man said, "My child, it would not be befitting a padishah's son to eat soup out of our cracked bowls. You had better give up the idea of sending the soup to him."

"Why shouldn't he eat the soup I made? Did he not order everybody to cook soup for him?" Before she sent the bowl of soup to the palace, the girl put her black-stoned ring in the bowl. She knew the padishah's son would recognize the ring.

As for the padishah's son, he used to put his spoon in every newly brought bowl of soup and stir it with hopes of finding the girl's black-stoned ring. Having found no ring, he then would order the servants to dispose of the soup. When the old man arrived at the palace doors with soup in a cracked bowl, the servants did not want to take the soup to the padishah's son. But the old man insisted, and they agreed to take the soup to the padishah's son at the old man's risk. As usual, the padishah's son stirred the soup with his spoon, and when he found the ring, he put it in his pocket.

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Then he told the servant to call the old man to his bedroom. He asked the peasant, "Do you have a young daughter?"

"Yes, I do, you Highness," answered the old man.

"Then tell me where you live."

When the padishah's son found out where the old man lived, he sent matchmakers to the old man's house and asked for the girl's hand in marriage. So the girl in the iron closet married the padishah's son, and they lived happily ever after.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Obviously, this is not a tale but a fragment utilizing, very ineptly, several of the motifs of the Cinderella story.